

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

Saturday, May 1, 2021
Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Jon Robinson

Mike Vrabel

Draft Press Conference



Q. This defense is going to look different; how important is it to make changes in this unit?

JON ROBINSON: In my time, you go into free agency and the Draft and there's roster turnover every year and we added players in free agency after the season was over, we added some guys this weekend via the draft and excited to work with all these guys, whenever we can get back and get rolling.

Q. For both of you, how critical were the interactions that you had with the guys that you ended up picking at the Senior Bowl? Seemed like there was a pretty good run, I think six players that you ended up selecting participated in the Senior Bowl this year.

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's a great question. I think that those guys, that was the one setting where we could really sit down and talk to those guys. They had Plexiglass up. Restrictions certainly weren't as loose then as they are now. But we had masks on and we were able to talk to them face-to-face and interact with those guys and came away impressed with those guys that we selected this weekend after talking to them down there.

MIKE VRABEL: Some of the practices are critical, that you can go back and watch, the one-on-ones and drill work and watch practice. Sometimes the game gets a little muddy. There's not a whole lot of time to prepare. It's pretty simple scheme on both sides. But I think the practices are really cool, to be able to go back and watch on tape, as well.

Q. You move up to go Fitzpatrick. How do you see him fitting in as a rookie?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we watched a lot on him and we like his size. We like his speed. We like his length. He's got good route running skills. He's got some things he's got to clean up. I love his toughness. I love his tenacity as a blocker. He's good in traffic catching the football. One of

the things as we continue to visit with him and talk to the staff there at Louisville about him is how tireless thinks work ethic was. That's one thing we talked about is get ready to bring your work ethic here to Nashville.

MIKE VRABEL: Things are going to be the same for Dez as everybody else we added this week and the players currently on our roster is try to make a daily impact on our football team. But for rookies it's about coming in and learning what to do. And being able to go out on the practice field at some point in time and be in positions to help themselves and to compete and try to earn the respect of their teammates.

Q. For both you guys, on the tight end position, not drafting a tight end, how close were you there at various points, is it disappointing not to get one and how would you assess where you are at that position right now?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we were close a couple times. We had some discussions yesterday, some today. And you know, we like the group that we've got and we'll continue to evaluate players that are available here after the Draft as we start that process. You know, and I've gotten several calls from general managers on other teams that have players on their roster. So the roster building process is never over. But we are excited with the group that we've got back, and see how those guys come in and compete and continue to evaluate the players that are available as we continue to move through the off-season.

MIKE VRABEL: I don't know what you'd like me to add. Is there something you didn't get answered there?

Q. Just, I guess, let me quick follow up then since you threw that out --

MIKE VRABEL: I don't want to be redundant, that's all, you know what I mean.

Q. It's probably more of a giant question, but Michael Pruitt, is there a possibility that he could be back?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we'll see kind of how it goes here and like I said in the post-draft, and as we inch closer to mandatory mini-camp and the off-season and training camp, and Michael has played a lot of good snaps for us.



He's done nothing to warrant not being under consideration to come back here.

Q. Wondering if you can evaluate Weaver, edge rushers, seems likes a lot of times, sometimes they forget about playing against the run. This guy seems to get a lot of high marks for playing against the run in addition to going against the quarterback and wonder if you guys can talk about that a little bit.

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I think that he's a tough player, he's a team captain and they speak very highly of him. He's got good length. He's got good strength in the position. You know, so much so that they even kicked him down at the Senior Bowl and you can see him play down some over the guard in there and he held his own. He's a high motor player. He's a fun player to watch. I think he's a disruptive player in both the run and the pass game. And excited for him to come in here and compete and work.

MIKE VRABEL: I think touching on that Senior Bowl experience, so many of these players go down and they are looking to showcase their skills and they ask them to move down inside and here is a kid that's going to go and try to make a name for himself or get recognized playing a position he's played for four years in college and they move him inside to play 3-technique. And he didn't leave. He didn't pack his stuff up and leave. He went in there and tried to do it the way they coached him to do it. Didn't run around blocks. He tried to play blocks how they coached him to do it. That's impressive and certainly stood out to me. I'm like, why don't you try and run around and make some plays. He was just like, he was trying to do it however they were coaching him how to do it and I think that says a lot about who he is.

Q. McMath seems like a guy that has all the measurables you could want in a receiver. Probably needs a little more polish before he's really ready to go. What's the key to unlocking his potential and getting him to be more than a special teams contributor?

JON ROBINSON: Well, I think it will be his daily work ethic, which is good, his preparation, his attention to details. But he is a big, fast receiver. He plays the game with toughness and a physicality component that's easy to see on film. And then his contributions in the kicking game, you know, certainly had him pushed up there for us and we had him really highly rated for what he's been able to do on special teams.

MIKE VRABEL: He plays with a lot of speed and violence and is willing to put his body on the line for his football team and we'll continue to develop him and work with him

on route craft and details and coverage recognition and all those things that go into improving as a wide receiver. But just enjoy his demeanor, his play demeanor and how fast and how physical he plays.

Q. How more dynamic do you feel you are as a team after the Draft?

JON ROBINSON: I think we are a better football team after this weekend. I said it last night and I said it this morning to the group. These guys that we selected this weekend, we loved watching those guys play football. We loved watching -- putting the tape on and watching them do a job that we are now going to hire them to do.

I think they are going to add value to the football team in their various roles and they are about what we are about with their play style and their makeup.

Q. Is Weaver an outside linebacker as opposed to an end? He's with that group?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I think he starts in that group and goes in the outside linebacker group. He's a guy with how we have been able to evaluate has shown he's able to play down at guard or hit up on a tackle. He has some versatility to play some defensive end potentially. We'll try him at a couple different spots but he certainly goes into the outside linebacker room to stop.

Q. Could you speak to the dynamic question? Is that something that's important to you?

MIKE VRABEL: Why did you say it so fast? You said it so quickly?

Q. Because I was going to get cut off maybe.

MIKE VRABEL: Okay. No, I mean, I don't think we're looking for a successful football team. We're looking for a team that's complements each other and that's competitive at every position. Those are the conversations that Jon and I have. We want a team that's about winning and pushing each other, and so whether that's dynamic or not, I don't know. I know that there were guys that we really enjoyed watching play football. Whether they had speed or size and they did something really, really well at their position. That's all I would allude to.

Q. You all lost a lot of defensive starters from last year in free agency and obviously have a big crop coming in both from this weekend and what you did in free agency. What's the key as a coaching staff when you have a lot of turnover and new faces to get everybody on the same page and ready to go quickly in a new

system?

MIKE VRABEL: And I would add to that, in a virtual setting, to start the program. You know, I think that that's challenging and I have to weigh my time in a team meeting and obviously we have special teams meetings, but how much time do I give the coaches as a defensive unit and offensive unit and then also, positionally. You know, we only get so much time with them right now virtually. So that's been something that I've had to probably sacrifice a little bit of now is my time with them as a team and be able to transfer that time to positional and unit meetings.

And so I think you start there. We've been breaking these guys up into groups so you'd have maybe two or three D-linemen, a couple linebackers and a couple defensive backs and they kind of go and they work on what we call virtual classroom and they work through the screens obviously with the coaches that are giving them calls, looking at formations and that's something that we are trying to do. We are just trying to recreate what they would do in a walk through on the field so they are hearing each other talk and voices. That's the first step.

The next step would be in-person meetings and walk throughs when we can do that and ultimately phase three and OTAs and then training camp. But you have to put the time in and hear the guy's voice and play off of the guy in front of you and work with the guy next to you, and that takes practice.

Q. Most of your picks on the first two days were defense and you add a couple more today. Do you feel like you got a nice blend of players who can both start and then also contribute as role players?

JON ROBINSON: Luke, I think that's what we try to do is put all of that together. The players that are on our roster after the season's over, the ones that we add in free agency, and then how we attack the Draft. You're trying to blend all that together with various roles on the defensive side of the football, various spots in their careers. But I feel like we've got a good mix of a lot of that on the defensive side.

Q. Given what you have with Derrick Henry, how much was size and ability and willingness to block a consideration when looking at wide receivers from this group?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's a great question, and I think both the guys that we added today, they are not afraid to go stick their face in there and dig out a saved or go stalk a corner and try to drive them out of bounds. You know, that toughness component. And when we talked to

some of these receivers, some we liked and weren't able to take them, that's huge for our football team. That's part of our identity is to go in there and block for whoever we hand the ball to. Much like when we asked the running backs to block in pass protection, when they are trying to get open and catch a football. They have to do their job in the run game and the running backs do their job in the pass game so that they can get open and catch.

Q. Potentially you talk about the roster not being done. With the cap situation what it is, could we perhaps see some rubbing? Tannehill out there, but could that open up more room to fill tight end or other needs?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's something that we are working through is taking stock of the Draft and the picks and how those resources are going to allocate into the cap figure. Seeing which players, it might be viable to do that to give us a little bit of room. I've said this before at the start of free agency, you have to kind of have your emergency roster needs set aside. You've got to put that in a savings account for lack of a better term so that you can field positions as injuries happen, knock-on-wood that we don't have that many.

But yeah, that's something that we are certainly working through is contracts and players to restructure to maybe give us a little bit more room there.

Q. Jayon had 26 sacks in 2018, having him back, the addition of Rice, that inside linebacker position and then Weaver, can you move guys around maybe to have more depth or to find more sacks this year from guys that are not traditional sacking positions?

MIKE VRABEL: I think we had some secondary sacks. If you look back, and again, it doesn't mean anything from one year to the next but we had a bunch of secondary sacks from corner, nickel, safety. We have to affect the quarterback, and whether that's bringing four, you start there, and if you can bring four and cover, and if not, you have to keep adding pieces into the rush.

Jayon has certainly proven to be somebody that has versatility. I think he's gotten better every year in his ball production and has come up with some huge turnovers for us. Some, either he's tipped or punched the ball out -- and other guys you mentioned, the younger players. We'll start off with those younger guys at a position and give them more as they can handle, that's fine.

Q. With two final picks, obviously we mentioned McMath there but going with some guys that can bring a lot in terms of special teams, with Brady breeze, what

did you see out of him out of Oregon and were you familiar with the fact that he knew wolf wall den and they are like really good friends, childhood friends, I believe?

JON ROBINSON: I think they certainly play stylistically similarly. They drove themselves around. He was a fun guy to watch on defense. He was a fun guy to watch in the kicking game. He's one of the first ones down on kicking units. He's instinctive. He finds the football on special teams much like he does on defense and he's a good tackler. He was a highly rated special teams guy for us in our stacks, and we were stoked to add him there late in the sixth.

Q. This follows up my question from Thursday, but now you have three of these draft picks who have played a combined one game since 2019. Just wondering why after such a weird year that's not an issue? And how does that change or impact their development?

JON ROBINSON: I think they are development will be dependent upon them. They are certainly going to get coached and going to get pushed. They are going to come in here and work hard in how quickly they progress and improve will ultimately be on them. I think that's one of the things that we had to work through this season was with the opt-out guys. You can't just take guys, every guy that played this year when you start to look at the skill sets of players and how they stack up, certainly vertically within their position group and horizontally with other positions, you have to go with the film that you have and get to know them on the Zoom calls and make those decisions.

Q. Looking at your receiver group, I don't know that there's specifically a defined slot receiver. How do you feel about that group and is that something that you would like to address?

MIKE VRABEL: We feel like we have slots there. I'm not sure if our evaluations of our receiving group are the same but we've got guys that played in the slot for us and we'll keep working guys around and giving them opportunities.

Q. Following up, with the addition of the guys you got today in the later rounds at wide receiver and Josh Reynolds, do you feel like you're pretty well set at the wide receiver position in terms of what departed there, or is there still a need to supplement given the departure of some of those guys?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, like I said earlier, we'll continue to evaluate players that are available. Players that are on the street that don't have jobs or players that do have jobs on

other teams that may become available. That's part of my job. That's part of our job is to constantly evaluate the pool of players, the supply of players that you can add to your football team and then make the decisions that's best for the team.

Q. Decision on Evans and his fifth-year option?

JON ROBINSON: Still working through that. I think we've got till Monday to kind of come to some finality there.

Q. Is a Steve Gostkowski return a possibility?

JON ROBINSON: Right now we have Tucker McCann the team and like of those other questions, we continue to look at the players that are out there and have discussions and kind of see where they are at. It's similar to the Michael Pruitt conversation. At the end of the day, we have to make the best decision for the football team and the player.

Q. I guess for both of you, but John, you brought up wanting to make this draft process a little more inclusive under the circumstances of everything being virtual. How do you feel like you went about accomplishing that, and is it just as simple as having more people on the Zoom calls or in these meetings.

JON ROBINSON: I think that that's probably it, is just having more people in the Zoom meetings, in the Zoom sessions, interacting with the players, if they are not interacting with the player, they are at least listening to whoever is interacting with the player and taking notes and looking for various things throughout the Zoom call to try to get an evaluation on how the player might fit.

MIKE VRABEL: I would add, I want to express my, I think gratitude to Jon and his staff. I know that those scouts, it's tough to be able to have to go out there and try to get information during the time that we're in; the coaching staff for the amount of time that they put in to bring all that information back to Jon and I for us to digest and go through and watch and stack them and put them all together, it's never going to be perfect because everybody is going to have a slightly different opinion. But we got a lot of great information from everybody that was involved. We'd just like to thank all those people that helped us bring these players in.

Q. You picked a lot of players that had participated in the Senior Bowl. Is that something that weighed in more heavily in the decision-making this year or was that just coincidence? What's behind that?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, talked a little about that earlier but that was certainly a great exposure for these players

fog down there and see those guys live, interview every single player at the Senior Bowl, have an actual face-to-face conversation with those players. That was really, really good for us to get the information firsthand down there.

Q. Did Weaver add or subtract point for getting a sack against BC?

MIKE VRABEL: This is a smart player and I'm going to tell you the conversation I had with Tyler. I said, if you want to play in this league, you're going to need to play against players like this and compare yourself against players in the National Football League and Rashad is one of those players and that's what I told Tyler. Tyler had his opportunity eventually. But this is about us bringing in guys that we enjoy watching and that we think are going to make great additions to our football team.

Q. Mike, as you look at the pieces that have now been added on defense, is there a characteristic that you kind of see that jumps out of this group and how eager are you to get working with them on the field?

MIKE VRABEL: Very eager. We are eager to coach. We are eager to develop and try to teach players. That's what we are in this business for outside of winning championships. So we'll have to find out when that's going to occur. We have a time set for rookie mini-camp. But as far as for whatever identity it may be, that has to be built through time in the meetings and the practice field and in games. That has to be developed.

We are excited but those are all things that have to be work on every day.

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